LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

Gary A. Yukl

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Preface

This book is about leadership in organizations. The primary focus is managerial leadership, as opposed to parliamentary leadership, leadership of social movements, or informal leadership in peer groups. The book presents a broad survey of theory and research on leadership in formal organizations. The topic of leadership effectiveness is of special interest. Again and again the discussion returns to the central question of what makes a person an effective leader? Since the definitions of leadership and management are so ambiguous and closely intertwined, much of the book could be said to deal with managerial effectiveness.

The content of the book reflects a dual concern for theory and practice. It is neither a purely theoretical discourse, nor a manual of techniques for practitioners. Theories are explained and evaluated, but the book also has recommendations and guidelines for improving leadership. There is no clear division of chapters into theory versus practice, but some chapters tend to emphasize one more than the other. Most of the guidelines for practitioners appear in Chapters 3, 8, 9, and 10. Chapters 1, 2, and 6 are primarily concerned with introducing and evaluating concepts and theories. Chapters 4, 5, and 7 present a mix of research, theory, and applications.

The field of leadership is in a state of ferment, with many continuing controversies about conceptual and methodological issues. The book addresses these issues rather than merely summarizing findings and recommending practices without concern for the quality of research that lies behind them. The only intentional bias in the review of research is that field studies are accorded greater attention than laboratory studies, and field experiments are given special recognition due to their scarcity and special contributions.

The literature review was intended to be incisive rather than comprehensive. This is not another "handbook" detailing an endless series of individual studies. Integration and extrapolation of findings was a

primary objective, although less was accomplished in this regard than was hoped. The book seeks to review what we know about leadership effectiveness. The review shows that we know more than is commonly believed, although much less than we need to know.

Even though the purpose of the book was to review prior theory and research rather than to present new concepts or theories, some original material can be found in several parts of the book. Chapter 5 includes a new taxonomy of nineteen categories of managerial behavior based on my own extensive research on this subject, and Chapter 7 presents propositions about the situational relevance of each type of behavior. Other attempts to develop better taxonomies can be found in Chapters 2 and 9. Chapter 6 presents for the first time my revised and extended Multiple Linkage Model of Leader Effectiveness. Chapter 3 presents some novel ideas about the successful exercise of power by leaders. Finally, Chapter 10 integrates and interprets the leadership literature in a more complete and innovative fashion than has been done previously.

This book is appropriate for use as the primary text in an undergraduate or graduate course on leadership. Courses of this type are found in psychology departments, sociology departments, business schools, departments of educational administration, and schools of public administration. The book could also be used in combination with other texts for courses in management, supervision, group dynamics, administration, and organizational behavior. The extensive coverage of important topics not dealt with except at a superficial level in most other texts makes the book ideal for inclusion on required reading lists for comprehensive graduate student examinations in management, industrial psychology, social psychology, sociology, public administration, and educational administration.

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Contents

Introduction: the Nature of Leadership

Leadership is a subject that has long excited interest among scholars and laymen alike. The term connotes images of powerful, dynamic persons who command victorious armies, direct corporate empires from atop gleaming skyscrapers, or shape the course of nations. Much of our conception of history is the story of military, political, religious, and social leaders. The exploits of brave and clever leaders are the essence of many legends and myths. The widespread fascination with leadership may be because it is such a mysterious process, as well as one that touches everyone's life. Why do certain leaders (Gandhi, Mohammed, Mao Tse-tung) inspire such intense fervor and dedication? How did certain leaders (Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Alexander the Great) build great empires? Why were certain leaders (Winston Churchill, Indira Gandhi, the Shah of Iran) suddenly deposed, despite their apparent power and record of successful accomplishments? How did certain rather undistinguished persons (Adolf Hitler, Claudius Caesar) rise to positions of great power? Why do some leaders have loyal followers who are willing to sacrifice their lives for their leader, and why are some other leaders so despised that their followers conspire to murder them (e.g., as occurred with the "fragging" of some military officers by enlisted men in Vietnam)?

Questions about leadership have long been a subject of speculation, but it was not until the twentieth century that scientific research on leadership was begun. The focus of much of the research has been on the determinants of leadership effectiveness. Behavioral scientists have attempted to discover what traits, abilities, behaviors, sources of power, or aspects of the situation determine how effective a leader will be in maintaining his leadership position, influencing followers, and accomplishing group objectives. The reasons why some people emerge as leaders and the determinants of the way a leader acts are other im-

portant questions that have been investigated, but the predominant concern has been leadership effectiveness.

Some progress has been made in probing the mysteries surrounding leadership, but many questions remain unanswered. In this book, major theories and research findings on leadership effectiveness will be reviewed, with particular emphasis on "managerial leadership" in formal organizations such as business corporations, government agencies, hospitals, universities, and so forth. In this first chapter, the subject is introduced by considering: (1) what is leadership? and (2) how do you measure leader effectiveness?

DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

The term "leadership" means different things to different people. As is often the case when a word from the common vocabulary is incorporated into the technical vocabulary of a scientific discipline, leadership has not been precisely redefined, and it still carries extraneous connotations that create ambiguity of meaning (Janda, 1960). Further confusion is caused by the use of other imprecise terms such as power, authority, management, administration, control, and supervision to describe the same phenomena. Bennis (1959, p. 259) surveyed the leadership literature and concluded: "Always, it seems, the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity. So we have invented an endless proliferation of terms to deal with it . . . and still the concept is not sufficiently defined."

Researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspective and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them. After a comprehensive review of the leadership literature, Stogdill (1974, p. 259) concluded that "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept." Leadership has been defined in terms of individual traits, behavior, influence over other people, interaction patterns, role relationships, occupation of an administrative position, and perception of others regarding legitimacy of influence. Some representative definitions are as follows:

1. Leadership is "the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal." (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; p. 7)
2. Leadership is "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals." (Tannenbaum, Weshler & Massarik, 1961; p. 24)

3. Leadership is "the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction." (Stogdill, 1974; p. 411)
4. Leadership is "an interaction between persons in which one presents information of a sort and in such a manner that the other becomes convinced that his outcomes (benefits/costs ratio) will be improved if he behaves in the manner suggested or desired." (Jacobs, 1970; p. 232)
5. Leadership is "a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activity as a group member." (Janda, 1960; p. 358)
6. Leadership is "an influence process whereby O's actions change P's behavior and P views the influence attempt as being legitimate and the change as being consistent with P's goals." (Kochan, Schmidt & DeCotiis, 1975; p. 285)
7. Leadership is "the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization." (Katz & Kahn, 1978; p. 528)

The term "leadership" is a relatively recent addition to the English language. It has only been in use for around two hundred years, although the term "leader" from which it was derived appeared as early as 1300 A.D. (Stogdill, 1974). Most conceptions of leadership imply that at various times one or more group members can be identified as a leader according to some observable difference between the person(s) and other members, who are referred to as "followers" or "subordinates." Definitions of leadership usually have as a common denominator the assumption that it is a group phenomenon involving the interaction between two or more persons (Janda, 1960). In addition, most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves an influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by the leader over followers. The numerous definitions of leadership that have been proposed appear to have little else in common. The definitions differ in many respects, including important differences in who exerts influence, the purpose of influence attempts, and the manner in which influence is exerted. Key points of divergence in conceptions about who should be regarded as a leader are summarized in Table 1–1. The differences are not just a case of scholarly nitpicking. They reflect deep disagreement about identification of leaders and leadership processes. Differences between researchers in their conception of leadership lead to differences in the choice of phenomena to investigate and to differences in interpretation of the data obtained.

One major controversy involves the issue of leadership as a distinct phenomenon. Some theorists believe that leadership is no differ-

TABLE 1-1

Different Conceptions of a Leader

Broader Conception		More Restrictive Conception
1. A person who influences group members ("distributed leadership").	vs.	1. A person who exerts the most influence on other group members ("focused leadership").
2. A person who influences group members in any manner.	vs.	2. A person who systematically influences member behavior toward attainment of group goals.
3. A person who influences group members to comply with his requests willingly or unwillingly.	vs.	3. A person who obtains the enthusiastic commitment of group members in carrying out his requests.

ent from the social influence processes occurring among all members of a group, and leadership is viewed as a collective process shared among the members. The opposing view is that there is a tendency in all groups toward role specialization with regard to leadership functions. These theorists believe that it is only meaningful to view "leadership" as distinct from "followership." The person who has the most influence in the group and who carries out most of the leadership functions is designated the leader. Other members are followers, even though some may be leaders of subgroups, or may assist the primary leader in carrying out leadership functions.

Related to this controversy is the issue of influence attempts. Some theorists hold that leadership includes only influence processes related to the task and objectives of the group. According to this view, influence attempts that are extraneous or detrimental to the group's mission and are intended only to benefit the leader are not regarded as "acts of leadership." This limitation seems more appropriate to formal task groups in organizations than to groups formed purely for social purposes, since the latter often have no explicit task objectives and exist only to satisfy member needs for companionship and social acceptance.

Some theorists would go even further in limiting the definition of leadership to exercise of influence resulting in enthusiastic commitment by followers, as opposed to indifferent compliance or reluctant obedience. Proponents of this view argue that a person who uses his authority and control over rewards and punishments to manipulate and coerce followers is not really "leading" them. The opposing view is that this definition is too restrictive, because it excludes influence processes that are important for understanding why a manager is effective or ineffective in a given situation. These theorists contend that

while it is useful to distinguish between exercising power and providing leadership, the latter process should be viewed with a broader perspective.

It is neither feasible nor desirable at this point in the development of the discipline to resolve the controversy over the appropriate definition of leadership. For the time being, it is better to use the various conceptions of leadership as a source of different perspectives on a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. In research, the operational definition of leadership will depend to a great extent on the purpose of the researcher (Campbell, 1977; Karmel, 1978). The purpose may be to identify leaders, to train them, to discover what they do, to determine how they are selected, or to compare effective and ineffective leaders. As Karmel (1978, p. 476) notes, "It is consequently very difficult to settle on a single definition of leadership that is general enough to accommodate these many meanings and specific enough to serve as an operationalization of the variable." Whenever feasible, leadership research should be designed to provide information relevant to the entire range of definitions, so that over time it will be possible to compare the utility of different conceptualizations and arrive at some consensus on the matter.

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Like conceptions of leadership, conceptions of leadership effectiveness differ from writer to writer. One major distinction between definitions of leadership effectiveness is the type of consequence or outcome selected to be the effectiveness criterion. These outcomes include such diverse things as group performance, attainment of group goals, group survival, group growth, group preparedness, group capacity to deal with crises, subordinate satisfaction with the leader, subordinate commitment to group goals, the psychological well-being and development of group members, and the leader's retention of his status and position in the group.

The most commonly used measure of leader effectiveness is the extent to which the leader's group or organization performs its task successfully and attains its goals. In some cases, objective measures of performance or goal attainment are available, such as profit growth, profit margin, sales increase, market share, sales relative to targeted sales, return on investment, productivity, cost per unit of output, costs in relation to budgeted expenditures, and so on. In other cases, subjective evaluations of performance are used, including ratings of the leader's effectiveness in carrying out his duties and responsibilities,

and ratings of the group's success in carrying out its mission. The ratings are usually made by the leader's superiors, peers, or subordinates.

The attitude of followers toward their leader is another common indicator of leader effectiveness. How well does the leader satisfy their needs and expectations? Do followers like him, respect him, admire him? Are followers strongly committed to carry out the leader's requests, or will they resist, ignore, or subvert his requests? Follower attitudes are usually measured with questionnaires or interviews. Various objective measures of behavior such as absenteeism, voluntary turnover, grievances, complaints to higher management, requests for transfer, slowdowns, wildcat strikes, and incidents of deliberate sabotage of equipment and facilities serve as indirect indicators of follower dissatisfaction and hostility toward their leader.

Leader effectiveness is occasionally measured in terms of the leader's contribution to the quality of group processes, as perceived by followers or by outside observers. Does the leader enhance group cohesiveness, member cooperation, member motivation, problem solving, decision making, and resolution of conflict among members? Does the leader contribute to the efficiency of role specialization, the organization of activities, the accumulation of resources, and the readiness of the group to deal with change and crisis? Does the leader improve the quality of work life, build the self-confidence of followers, increase their skills, and contribute to their psychological growth and development?

The selection of appropriate criteria of leader effectiveness depends on the objectives and values of the person making the evaluation. A leader's superiors are likely to prefer different criteria than the leader's subordinates. When there are many alternative measures of effectiveness, it is usually an arbitrary decision as to which is most relevant. The different criteria are often uncorrelated, and may even be negatively correlated. For example, growth in sales or output is sometimes achieved at the cost of reduced efficiency and lower profits. Tradeoffs can occur even within the same criterion at different points of time. For example, profits may be increased in the short run by neglecting activities that have a delayed effect on profits, such as maintenance of equipment, research and development, investment in new technology, and development of employees. In the long run, the net effect of cutting these essential activities is likely to be lower profits. To cope with the problems of partially incompatible criteria, it is usually best to include a variety of different criteria in research on leadership effectiveness and to examine the separate impact of the leader on each of these criteria over an extended period of time. Multiple con-

ceptions of effectiveness, like multiple conceptions of leadership, serve to broaden our perspective and enlarge the scope of inquiry.

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR RESEARCH APPROACHES

Leadership has been studied in different ways, depending on the researcher's conception of leadership and methodological preferences. Most leadership studies have dealt only with one narrow aspect of the phenomenon. Nearly all of the research on leadership can be classified into one of the following four approaches: (1) power-influence approach, (2) trait approach, (3) behavior approach, and (4) situational approach. The implicit assumptions about causal relationships among variables are shown in Figure 1–1 for each approach.
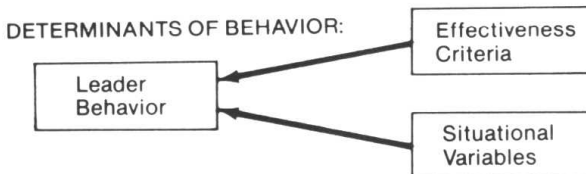
1. POWER-INFLUENCE APPROACH:

Power Bases and Usage ⟷ Effectiveness Criteria

2. TRAIT APPROACH:

Leader Traits and Skills → Effectiveness Criteria

3. BEHAVIOR APPROACH:

Leader Behavior → Intervening Variables → End Result Variables

4. SITUATIONAL APPROACH:

DETERMINANTS OF BEHAVIOR:

Effectiveness Criteria → Leader Behavior ← Situational Variables

CONTINGENCY MODELS:

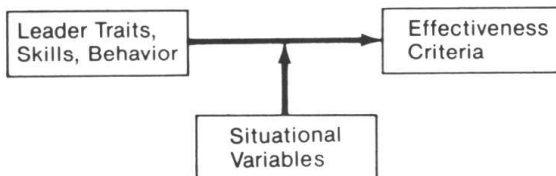Leader Traits, Skills, Behavior → Effectiveness Criteria ← Situational Variables

FIGURE 1–1

General Approaches in Research on Leader Effectiveness